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- (14) Outline of Prime Minister Abe's press conference in Sydney:
Anti-Terrorism Special Measure Law portion

ASAHI (Page 2) (Full)
Eve., September 10, 2007

The following is a gist of the portion of Prime Minister Abe's news
conference in Sydney, Australia, that dealt with the Anti-Terrorism
Special Measures Law:

The international situation is extremely severe, but Japan has made an international commitment (to continue supply activities in the Indian Ocean), for which I have a great responsibility. I am resolved to carry out every means possible in order to continue the war on terror and the Self-Defense Forces' supply operations. In order to obtain the understanding of the opposition parties, starting with the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto), I plan to tackle this issue at the risk of my position.

-- Will you present to the extraordinary Diet session a bill to extend the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law or a new bill? Are you prepared to meet with the head of the DPJ and other parties prior presenting the bill?

Terrorism must not be allowed to continue. In that context, Japan's carrying out its international contribution is one basic element of my assertive diplomacy. I must somehow make sure that the operations continue.

We must present to the Diet a bill that will allow the continuance of the SDF supply operations that have been highly appreciated by the international community. We must pass the bill after presenting it.

At the time of presenting the bill, I must make every effort to obtain the understanding of the DPJ in particular. I will put in every effort and at the risk of my own position, seek their understanding. I would like to ask DPJ President Ozawa for a meeting at as early a stage as possible.

-- By saying you would risk your own position, are you resolved to have the cabinet resign en masse in case the supply operations cannot be continued?

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In order to make it possible for them to continue, I must make every effort possible. I must fulfill my responsibility, my duty using all my capabilities. Naturally, I have no intention of clinging on to my position (if I fail)."

(15) High hurdle for Prime Minister Abe to extend Antiterrorism Law in extra Diet session; No common ground with DPJ

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
September 9, 2007

Makoto Nakayama, Sydney

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, in an informal meeting with reporters accompanying him to Sydney, emphasized a stance of fighting with his back to the wall in an attempt to extend the Antiterrorism Special Measures Law, which allows Japan to take part in the war on terror. He revealed the possibility of looking into new legislation. He intends to take every possible measure in order to get understanding from the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), the largest party in the House of Councillors, without sticking to the idea of just extending the Antiterrorism Law. However, Abe has yet to find any concrete common ground with the DPJ. At the upcoming extraordinary Diet session to be convened on Sept. 10, he will undergo hardships from the beginning.

A US administration official quoted President George W. Bush as urging in his meeting on Sept. 8 with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe: "I want you to find at any cost a way to continue the Maritime Self-Defense Force's refueling mission in the Indian Ocean."

In the informal meeting with the reporters, Abe underscored his eagerness for extending the current law, saying: "Continuing the refueling operation is an international commitment. So my responsibility for that is heavy. I have to exert all my strength."

However, there are extremely high barriers against an extension of the MSDF's refueling operation, since DPJ President Ichiro Ozawa has clarified his position of opposing either an extension of the

present law or new legislation.

There is no benefit for the DPJ to respond to discussion, as the main opposition party aims to topple the Abe government.

Ozawa has called on Japan to participate in the ISAF (International Security Assistance Force). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and Defense Ministry remain negative about Ozawa's idea out of concern that the ISAF mission carries considerable risks.

Defense Minister Masahiko Komura told reporters on Sept. 8 about Japan's participation in logistic support:

"International needs of the current maritime refueling operation are stronger than transporting goods and personnel by helicopters. For the SDF, that mission is easy to carry out."

Komura then asserted:

"It is not true that the Defense Ministry and the SDF have looked into the possibility of Japan's participation in the ISAF. I haven't received any request from the government a study of consideration of

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land transportation in Afghanistan. "

Asked by reporters whether he would consider joining the ISAF, Abe changed the subject, responding, "I want to maintain the current MSDF operation."

Even if the ruling and opposition camps reach accord to hold policy consultations, chance are extremely slim that the government and ruling coalition will accept the humanitarian assistance measures that the DPJ is now working out.

If a bill to extend the Antiterrorism Law, which expires on Nov. 1, is not passed through the Diet before that date, it will be scrapped. However, the Diet will be able to deliberate new legislation beyond Nov. 1. Even if the refueling mission is discontinued, the mission will be resumed if new legislation gets through the Diet during the extra session. However, there remain barriers to pass the legislation.

(16) Online polling: Abe cabinet unpopular from before Endo problem

TOKYO (Page 2) (Abridged)
September 7, 2007

The Tokyo Shimbun yesterday tabulated findings from its online poll conducted to probe public attitudes over political issues. Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Minister Endo has now resigned from his portfolio because a mutual aid association headed by him had received subsidies from his ministry. Irrespective of such impropriety, Prime Minister Abe was severely rated in the survey on the basis of his recent cabinet shuffle and his appointment of a new executive lineup for his ruling Liberal Democratic Party. In addition, the survey also found critical attitudes toward Abe's initiative to build a "beautiful country."

In the survey, respondents were asked about Abe's appointments to his cabinet and party. In response to this question, favorable ratings totaled 25.7 PERCENT, with critical ratings totaling 68.1 PERCENT.

On this question, the Tokyo Shimbun looked into interim results as of Aug. 29 before Endo's problem was brought to light. At that point, favorable ratings totaled 25.2 PERCENT, with critical ratings adding up to 69.9 PERCENT. As seen from these figures, there was almost no change from the finalized results.

Some respondents were affirmative about Abe's shuffling of his cabinet and his party's executive lineup to a certain extent. However, they said it has been offset by the Endo problem. As far as answers from all respondents are concerned, however, Abe's new appointees to his cabinet and party do not seem to have been

fundamentally appreciated.

Respondents were also asked what they thought about Abe's initiative to create a "beautiful country," which he advocated in his inaugural press conference. In response to this question, a total of about 80 PERCENT were negative, with 58.4 PERCENT urging him to give up on that initiative as an idea aloof from public thinking and 21.0 PERCENT saying he should wait for a while to gauge public reactions.

Even among LDP supporters, more than half were negative about Abe's

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"beautiful country" advocacy.

Respondents were further asked to prioritize issues for the new Abe cabinet. In response, 62.9 PERCENT picked "pension and other policy measures close to public life," topping all other answers. Meanwhile, Abe has advocated reviewing Japan's postwar regime, such as constitutional revision and collective self-defense. However, those who opted for this postwar regime review accounted for only 5.9 PERCENT.

When asked whether to support the Abe cabinet, "yes" and "yes to a certain degree" totaled 25.5 PERCENT, up about 8 percentage points from the last poll. However, the Abe cabinet's support rate still stayed low. "No to a certain degree" and "no" totaled 74.5 PERCENT.

Polling methodology: The survey was conducted online with 500 anonymous monitors invited on the Internet for answers to questions relating to politics. This survey differs from telephone-based and face-to-face polling. The survey this time was taken from late August through early this month, with 404 persons (80.8 PERCENT) responding.

(17) Interviews with Minoru Terada and Kazuhiro Haraguchi on extension of Antiterrorism Law

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Abridged slightly)
September 9, 2007

The question of extending the Antiterrorism Special Measures Law is certain to take center stage in the extraordinary Diet session that will convene tomorrow. Although the government and ruling coalition have been playing up the importance of the Maritime Self-Defense Force's refueling services to naval vessels of other countries in the Indian Ocean, the Democratic Party of Japan, which opposes the law's extension, has now become the largest party in the House of Councillors. Tensions are likely to mount in the Diet toward November 1, the deadline for the Antiterrorism Law.

Interview with Parliamentary Vice Defense Minister Minoru Terada -- National interests should be prioritized over Lower House dissolution

Q: Why must the Antiterrorism Law be extended?

Terada: With the Taliban and al-Qaeda gaining strength recently, there has been a spate of hostage and bombing incidents. Many countries have stepped up their efforts to deter terrorism, and Japan cannot afford to discontinue its refueling mission in the Indian Ocean -- Japan's international contribution. The law must be extended.

Q: DPJ President Ichiro Ozawa is opposed to an extension, citing a lack of a UN Security Council resolution as the basis for the dispatch of the SDF.

Terada: He is misinterpreting facts. The United Nations has adopted a resolution denouncing terrorism and has also endorsed the international community to take appropriate measures to prevent terrorism. Mr. Ozawa thinks that the SDF is allowed to do anything as long as the United Nations is involved, and we do not agree. The SDF is not allowed to join foreign forces taking military action

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based on a UN resolution.

Q: Some observers think that Japan should use humanitarian aid more actively.

Terada: The Antiterrorism Law covers such activities as humanitarian and reconstruction assistance, refugee rescue, and supply transport. Grassroots assistance does not require legislation. Official development assistance is also possible based on an agreement with a recipient country. There are many things Japan can do under the existing system.

Q: Is there any chance for the government to come up with a new law that reflects the DPJ's views?

Terada: Before discussing new legislation, it is important for the ruling and opposition parties to discuss matters sincerely. The government wants to obtain the understanding of the opposition bloc by spelling out the importance of the SDF mission. The government is willing to establish a new law that takes in the opposition bloc's proposals.

Q: The DPJ is unlikely to change its stance, however.

Terada: There shouldn't be any predetermined conclusion. The DPJ should seriously discuss national interests instead of aiming for a Lower House dissolution. I don't think the DPJ opposes matters for the sake of opposition. The DPJ must present counterproposals as a responsible opposition party.

Interview with DPJ Lower House lawmaker Kazuhiro Haraguchi --
Government must disclose specifics of MSDF mission

Q: Why is your party opposing an extension of the Antiterrorism Law?

Haraguchi: How many terrorists have been captured because of Japan's assistance for the antiterrorism operations? The government has not disclosed any information. It has not presented an exit strategy for the MSDF mission, either. The lack of information-disclose and explanation means civilian control is not working.

Q: The DPJ is criticizing the MSDF mission, citing a lack of a UN resolution.

Haraguchi: The SDF is reportedly supporting antiterrorism operations on the condition that it does not become fully integrated with military actions and stay away from combat zones. But those conditions are fictitious. The Antiterrorism Law is tinged with dangerous overtones. The antiterrorism operations do not constitute collective defense based on a UN resolution.

Q: Some in the government and ruling bloc are calling for a new law reflecting DPJ views based on a UN resolution.

Haraguchi: The new law is not here yet, so I have nothing to say about it. The DPJ will use its investigative powers in national politics to make the government disclose information for the public. Once specifics of Japan's assistance become clear, the public might call for an extension of the law. At the same time, we have some suspicions, such as whether US vessels refueled by the MSDF might be carrying out activities in Iraq. If such suspicions are proved true,

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the general public might press the government to discard the new legislation plan and come up with a new approach altogether.

Q: What kind of physical support should Japan extend if the SDF was withdrawn?

Haraguchi: Do you know why Japan is appreciated by people in Cambodia? It is because Japan helped reconstruct the culture, traditions, and religion they revered and supported the medical and education systems. That is the only way to eliminate terrorism.

Q: Some say that in the event Japan was attacked, the United States would be the only country that defends Japan.

Haraguchi: That is not true. Boggled down in the Iraq war, the United States was not able to take military action following a nuclear test by North Korea. The United States is trying to delist North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism despite the issue of Japanese abducted by North Korea. Japan is being ignored despite its commitment to the United States. No one spares time or energy for the weak follower.

(18) Ozawa strategy suffers setback: DPJ in Upper House makes concession on selection of Budget Committee chairman, prioritizing cooperation with LDP

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)
September 8, 2007

Upper House Budget Committee chairmanship is the post that holds the key to Diet steering in the upcoming extraordinary session. The Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) has been considered most likely to grab the post. However, the DPJ and the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) during talks on Sept. 7 agreed to allocate the post to the LDP, as in the past. The DPJ had been set for introducing a resolution dismissing the Budget Committee chairman if the LDP refuses to vacate the post. However, with the LDP brandishing the threat of submitting a resolution dismissing the Lower House Speaker, the DPJ lost its nerve and agreed to cooperate with the LDP. As a result, Chairman Ozawa's order to gain all key chairmanships in the Upper House was not met. His strategy of confronting the ruling bloc in the extraordinary Diet session has suffered a setback right from the beginning.

The DPJ had envisaged a strategy of cornering the government and the ruling parties using the administrative investigation rights in the Upper House, where the opposition camp holds a majority. The Budget Committee, which covers issues on national administration in general is supposed to serve a main battlefield for the DPJ to implement its strategy. Deputy President Kan had noted, "The number 1 party should be responsible for the Budget Committee."

However, Upper House President Azuma Koshiishi is proud of his good communication lines to Mikio Aoki, former chairman of the LDP caucus in the Upper House. From the beginning, he has been consistently attaching importance to cooperation with the LDP. He had told persons around him that he would give the Budget Committee chairmanship to the LDP.

For this reason, Ozawa ordered Koshiishi during their meeting to grab the chairmanships of key committees. Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama also told a press conference on the afternoon of Sept. 7: "If we secure the Budget Committee chairmanship, we would be able to

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impress the public that politics has changed. We are determined to secure the Budget Committee chairmanship by all means." Senior LDP officials had been projecting weakness to the DPJ, which had been stepping up its offensive up until the evening of Sept. 6. One LDP member even noted, "We are ready to surrender."

However, the LDP at the same time continued to apply pressure on the DPJ during Lower House plenary sessions, hinting at a dismissal of DPJ chairmen of standing committees and a replacement of Vice Speaker Takahiro Yokomichi, who came from the DPJ.

As a result, Koshiishi has opted to avoid such turmoil, determining that it would be better to settle the selection of committee chairmen amicably. Koshiishi phoned Ozawa on the afternoon of the 7th and obtained a free hand for the selection of chairmen. Ozawa does not consider it possible to force the ruling camp to dissolve the Lower House for a snap election outright under the present

circumstances. He has apparently tolerated his party making concessions to the ruling camp, which holds more than two-thirds of Lower House seats

However, many DPJ members feel strongly about the outcome, with one mid-ranking official saying, "Party members will never be convinced. We have no other choice but to call on Mr. Koshiishi to step down." The outcome of the selection of Upper House committee chairmen has raised a question on the DPJ's determination to confront the LDP.

SCHIEFFER